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with no unfriendly feeling. It is because we attach so much value to the preservation of amity and good-will between the people of England and of this country that we feel called upon to rebuke even with sternness those who would cast the seeds of dissension and jealousy between them. The extension of commerce is daily multiplying and strengthening the ties which bind them to each other; and certainly literature and science ought to do nothing to rupture these grateful bonds.

ART. XI. — *Bards of the Bible*. By GEORGE GILFILLAN.
New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1851. 12mo. pp. 325.

THERE is something, after all, in names. *The Bards of the Bible*, forsooth! It sounds somewhat oddly to our ears, on this side of the Atlantic. We were aware that now and then an instance might be found, in poetry, where *bard* is used as synonymous with *poet*; such as "Rapt into future times, the *bard* began." But this we have always supposed to be mere poetic license. The true reason of its use, in this case, lies in the measure of the verse; *bard* was commodious here, where *poet* would have marred the metre. But as to general or correct use in prose, there is no doubt of the *oddity* and incongruousness of the title. We have supposed that the word belonged to the ancient Gauls, who named those persons *bards* that composed *war-songs* or *battle-songs*; while the song itself was called *bardiét*. And so we have heard of *Runic bards* and *Celtic bards*; the first, among the Goths and Scandinavians, and the second among the Celts of Northwestern Europe. Songs of battle and of victory are generally among the oldest poetry of any nation. The deep interest taken by uncivilized men in the events of contest and conquest seems first to have inspired the human mind with the enthusiasm appropriate to poetry. The *religious* element, very soon, if not from the first, intermingled itself with this.

It is indeed true, that within this limited sense of the word *bard* we might include some of the writers of poetry

in the Bible. We find triumphal odes in Exodus xv., in Judges v., Psalms xviii., lxviii., Isaiah xiv., Habakkuk iii.; not to mention a number of brief fragments (to all appearance) of other compositions of the like nature. But to think of characterizing, in sober prose, *all* the Hebrew poets by such a name, is beyond our cis-Atlantic measure of daring.

The title is certainly in good keeping with the book. If the sound of it is somewhat strange to our unpractised ears, and incongruous with that sober reverence with which we are accustomed to hear the writers of the Bible spoken of, it is not more so than the "critical poem" which follows. It is from this that we first come to know that the Pentateuch, (besides its few poetic fragments and fewer lyric songs,) is *en masse* a piece of poetry; that the historical books in general are poetry; that the Gospels are poetry; and that the writings of Paul and James are poetry. If this piece of information were of any value, we should be bound to thank the writer for having made such a discovery, and having communicated the knowledge of his achievement to the world.

How much the writer values his efforts and his success in writing a *poetical critique*, is plain from what he says on page 14. "Many elaborate and learned criticisms," he remarks, "have been made on the poetry of the Bible; but the fragmentary essay of Herder alone seems to approach to the idea of a *prose poem* on the subject." He thinks that "a new and fuller effort is demanded." He says of preceding writers, — "They seem in search of mistakes, or in search of mysteries, to have forgotten that the Bible is a *poem* at all." But to speak of *forgetting* what was never before known or taught is hardly proper. Surely Mr. Gilfillan is the first man that ever discovered the whole Bible to be a poem; and this discovery has been first developed, in this *prose-poetic* critique. To him exclusively belongs the honor attached to the discovery; and he should not speak disparagingly of others, who do not possess his gift of *second-sight*.

We have been in the habit of supposing that the genealogical catalogues in the Pentateuch; and the architectural details in respect to the formation of the tabernacle, which occupy somewhat of a large space in Exodus; and, also, the whole of the Mosaic ritual directions, and of the laws civil and social, were something quite distinct from *poetry*.

We have, hitherto, come far short of finding out the *poetry* of the first nine chapters of the first book of Chronicles; or of the corresponding lists of names in Ezra, Nehemiah, and elsewhere. But no matter. It was said, some time ago in England, that "the Muses had never been able to get a passage across the Atlantic." If so, and if even steamboat accommodations are not sufficient to tempt those ladies to cross the great waters, then it cannot be any matter of wonder that we of the New World should be quite incompetent to write a "poetical critique" on the *poetry* of genealogies, of architectural details, of ritual precepts, and of civil ordinances. Not even in historical narratives, as such, have we been able to discover it. How much the work before us may enlighten us, and contribute to change our views, remains to be seen.

We have read, in days that are past, of the *Orations* of Edward Irving, meaning (in vulgar parlance) his *Sermons*. Perhaps Mr. Gilfillan, who has exalted that gentleman to a place near the apex of the human pyramid, and who speaks of him as having a "neck clothed with thunder," learned from his great exemplar the art of exciting popular wonder or curiosity by strange fantastic appellations and criticisms. We took up this work with the expectation of finding some sallies of imagination. We had been taught, by the perusal of some of this writer's former works, to expect them. He is, beyond all doubt, one of those *second-sighted* men, "who see a sight we cannot see, and hear a voice we cannot hear." He tells us in his introduction, that "the Bible is a mass of beautiful figures. . . It has arrayed itself in the charms of fiction. . . It has gathered new warmth and new power from the very passions of clay. [?] . . The light is God's shadow. . . The quick spirit of the book has *ransacked* creation, to lay its treasures on Jehovah's altar." He also says, that "*poetry* is the only speech which has the power of making a permanent impression, . . since it gives two ideas in the space of one." We have hesitated here; for we are not sure that we understand what is meant by the space of an idea. We had supposed that ideas, in themselves, were hardly the tenants of *space*; perhaps they may be, in the land of Second-sight.

What all the critics before and since Herder have failed to do, and what Herder himself only began to do, is completed,

it would seem, by Mr. Gilfillan. Many friends importuned him, he says, to engage in the undertaking; and he seems to have been "nothing loath," and to have accomplished it much to his own satisfaction.

We have read the book, which is introduced to us by a title so repulsive to our taste, with mingled emotions. There are some passages in it, and many single expressions, which convey vivid ideas, and present pleasing images. We concede to him fancy, imagination, and a very considerable acquaintance with the sources of poetical imagery. But these are not the only qualifications that are needed, to write instructively on Hebrew poetry. His book reminds us very strongly of a passage in another poet and critic, somewhat different from the author of the *Bards of the Bible*. It runs thus :

"Inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis,
Purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter
Assuitur pannus.

Amphora cœpit
Institui; currente rotâ, cur urceus exit?"

"Denique sit quodvis, *simplex* duntaxat et unum."

Yes, this precious *simplex*! Of all the books on earth, the Bible exhibits it most. A comment on it, of any kind, which is spotted throughout with "*purpurei panni qui late splendeant*," seems to us one of the greatest of all incongruities. We say to all *red patches*, and lacquer, and gold lace, and flaunting red and yellow ribbons, — yea, even to pinks, and roses, and peonies, and violets, and dandelions, — to all these, and all their likes, we say, "Procul! O procul! este profani." What are you doing, when you present yourselves as the chief products of God's eternal word? In your own place, for ornaments, and nosegays, and bouquets, and flower vases, you are very pretty, and therefore, in your proper place, are very acceptable. But we do not wish to cull you from the garden of God, when we are hungering for the *food* which the tree of life affords. We go to that garden for nutritious vegetables and salutary fruits. But we are presented by Mr. Gilfillan with pretty nosegays and splendid bouquets. We go there looking for healthful nourishment, and we are told to lie down among the pinks and tulips and jessamines and roses, and that we shall, by so doing, be better satisfied than by any common-place affair of eating. Yet nature will speak out.

Sweet odors soon nauseate the most ardent lover of them. They afford a momentary pleasure, but they are not *bread*. We want that, we must have it ; and when we ask for it, because we are hungry and need it, a man may as well give us a stone, in the way of reply, as a splendid flower.

We have learned nothing from this book which will enable us to descry the metes and bounds of poetry, or to tell where poetry is separated from prose. *What constitutes Hebrew poetry*, is a question which we have yet to investigate for ourselves. Mr. Gilfillan has said some things about it which are true, but which were well known a long time before he took up his pen. He has told us, among other things, that it employs "figurative language." But the reason of this is somewhat curious, and worth a moment of our attention. Each thought in poetry, he tells us, "*floats double*, like the swan." "It is so with all high thoughts," he goes on to say ; and then he adds, "that the *proof* of great thoughts is, will they translate into figured and sensuous expression ? Will nature recognize, own, and clothe them, as if they were her own ? Or must they stand small, shivering, and naked, before her unopened door ?" p. 33.

Thus much, then, for the nature of poetic thoughts ; of which he says, that "each birth is of twins." But what of these *twins* ? Are they both of the same stamp ? Or is one of them superior to the other ? We ask this question, because, inasmuch as a poetic thought (each one being double) is to be "translated into figured and sensuous expression," we have some difficulty to find out which of the twins (or whether both of them) is to be translated and to have put upon it the costume of *sensuousness*. If only one of the two, then which of them ? If both, are they both to have one and the same sensuous dress ? We used to think that the word *sensuous* had an ugly meaning ; but recent philosophy is applying it, as it would seem, to translate the German *sinnlich*, which merely indicates that which is the object of any of the senses ; or it is said of a person who does not go beyond the objects of sense in his views and reasonings. In the latter case, the Germans say that he is *sinnlich*. Of course, we must suppose that Mr. Gilfillan has paid some homage to the translators of German philosophy in the epithet which he has here chosen. He should know, at least,

that the English word by no means expresses the full sense of the German one ; and if all genuine poetic ideas are to be put to the test of being invested with a *sensuous* costume, or rather of being fitted for it, then all poetry must in part consist of elements somewhat different from those which we had supposed. At least, such a test would confine poetry within a somewhat narrow circle.

So much for the first quality of Hebrew poetry. The second, according to our author, is *simplicity*. A part of his illustration of this is very well ; but when he says that "*unconsciousness* is the highest style of simplicity," we confess ourselves again at a loss. In what sense does *unconsciousness* belong to style ? or how to simplicity ? *Style* is the manner in which one speaks or writes ; *simplicity* belongs to discourse as a quality. But how comes either of these by a *consciousness* ? *Unconscious*, of course, are all things sensible or ideal, without any distinction, excepting man ; for his *consciousness* makes him a *person*, and as such, he is distinct from other things. How then can *unconsciousness* belong, as a *discriminating* characteristic, either to style or to simplicity, since it is common to all things except man ? The author will probably say, however, that we mistake him ; and that he only means to affirm that the *man* who writes *simply* is *unconscious* of it. This, however, is not what he has actually said ; nor does the concession that such is his meaning remove all difficulty. Does he mean to say, we may still ask, that a writer's *simplicity of style* is no object of consciousness to him ; or, in other words, that he is not conscious of writing, or aiming to write, *simply*, when he does so ? We must again confess ourselves somewhat skeptical here. Did any one ever see much simplicity in the efforts of a lad who is busied with his early compositions ? Does not his paucity of thought compel him to use all manner of devices, in order to set off what he does say to good advantage ? This is, at least, the usual course of things. *Simplicity* of writing is the last and highest attainment in it. It is only when a man gets a sufficiency of ideas, which enables him to feel that he has a somewhat large bank to draw upon, that he loses the fear of saying something which may not deserve consideration ; and until he reaches that point, he will be tempted to employ tinsel and lacquer where he cannot present the solid metal.

Now, to arrive at such a point must be a matter of conscious effort, and a business of severe toil. A thousand tinsel compositions do not show either the skill or the strength of a single one of solid metal. It is singular, but none the less true, that all the labors of an elocutionist must be expended on bringing his pupils back to a natural mode of speaking. And so is it with the business of *writing*; for new beginners, almost without fail, betake themselves to efforts of polishing and gilding. The last and highest attainment is *simplicity*; but this is so far from being an affair of *unconsciousness*, that no one ever accomplishes it except by much discipline and great care. We cannot understand Mr. Gilfillan in relation to this matter, any better when he makes his interpretation, than we can when we take his language as it stands.

We may *guess* wrong, although of a race who are somewhat characterized by guessing. But from all the illustrations of *unconsciousness*, when taken together, we *guess* the writer means to have it understood, that when he bursts out, as he does on nearly every page, into excessive and superabounding prettinesses, it is all spontaneous in him; there is no design in it, and he has no consciousness of it. Well may we say of him in truth, if he thinks it to be any glory,

"He cannot open
His mouth, but out there flies a trope."

And even if, in reviewing his *spontaneities*, he should afterwards find matter of self-gratulation, he can plead, as he tells us *sub rosa*, the example of Bunyan, who, he says, "with harmless vanity *crowed* over his achievements."

The *boldness* of the Hebrew bards comes next in order. On this point Mr. Gilfillan has said some good things. In the sequel, however, when he comes to characterize the *bards prophetic*, he has said some things which seem to us a little more than bold.

"The Hebrew prophet," says he "in his highest form, was a solitary salvadge [*i. e.* savage] man, residing with lions, when he was not waylaying kings, . . . whose dark eye swam with a fine insanity, gathered from solitary communings with the sand, . . . as well as with the light of the divine afflatus. . . . How startling his coming," he adds, "to crowned or conquering guilt! Wild from the wilderness, bearded like its lion-lord, the fury of God glaring in his eye . . . his words stern, swelling,

tinged on their edges with a terrible poetry . . . he was a momentary incarnation—a meteor kindled at the eye, and blown on the breath, of the Eternal.” p. 42.

Ye prophets of the most high God! we are tempted to exclaim; ye who were serious, grave, earnest, benevolent, faithful messengers of the Eternal, what think ye of such a portraiture? And must you be presented to our view as *salvadge waylayers* (i. e. the assassins) of kings? And that *fine insanity* of yours, coming *from communing with the sand*; how are we to understand it? That dwelling in sandy deserts may bring on insanity, we doubt not; but a *fine insanity* from this source, we have not yet learned to understand or appreciate. Much less do we understand how this *fine insanity* can come by “*communings with the light of a divine afflatus*.” We can understand that such an afflatus may animate, instruct, guide, and also sanctify. But the *light* of it, is what brings us to a halt. And then, that *lion-beard* and *wildness*; that *fury of God glaring in your eyes*; those words, whose *edges were tinged with terrible poetry*—how, where, and when did you gather and retain audiences to listen to you, when you came before them in such a plight? Your task was truly severe, under such circumstances. No wonder that the tender heart of Jeremiah shrunk back from such an office. Nor can it be wonderful, that he must be even *forced* to undertake it.

Still one more secret as to this matter remains untold. The prophet's *words, tinged on their edges with terrible poetry*—what are they? *Terrible poetry*, we presume, itself consists of *words*; and how one set of words can be applied in the way of tinging the edges only of another set, is beyond our simple capacities. But then, as the Muses have not yet deigned to visit our quarter of the globe, it is no wonder that their votary on the other side of the mighty deep, who, besides their teachings, has probably the gift of a *second-sight*, should conceive of, and confess, things quite beyond our apprehension.

The last characteristic of Hebrew poetry given, is its *high moral tone, and constant religious reference*. On this topic, Mr. Gilfillan has written some good things, and, as usual, mixed with them much that is declamatory, or rhapsodical, or unintelligible.

What is the fruit, then, which we gather from this *poetico-critical* excursion? We have learned, that Hebrew poetry is *figurative*, that it is *simple*, that it is *bold*, and that it has a *high moral tone*. Good! all true, every word of it. But is not all this equally true of Hebrew *prose*? Most clearly it is, in every particular. What has Mr. Gilfillan said, then, which teaches us *how to distinguish the poetry from the prose*? Not a word here. Since all that he says is equally true of both, how shall we understand when we are within the precincts of the one or of the other? Not a word to guide us, with any certainty. The "*purpurei panni*" we can indeed see profusely tacked on to the whole of the texture which he has woven. But their glare offends our weak eyes, and we turn away. We look to the garden of God for salutary fruit and food; and we are met with bland looks and honeyed speech, and our hands are filled with flaunting nosegays, and our heads crowned with a wreath of peonies and dahlias. But alas! these will not satisfy hunger for the bread of life. We long for that. We know that the material of it is furnished by the garden, and we are not willing to accept from any keeper of it bunches of flowers in its stead. Pretty things they may be to look at, for a little while; but we cannot live on them a single day.

Mr. Gilfillan himself does not appear to be conscious, that thus far he has not given any *distinctive* traits, which mark the productions of the sacred *bards*, as separated from other Scriptural writings. The secret of this seems to lie in his own peculiar view of the subject at large, namely, that the whole Bible, through and through, is *poetry*. If so, there is indeed no need to make an effort to distinguish poetry from prose; for the latter has really and fairly no place in the Scriptures.

Our author has certainly adopted a new method of discovering and defining *poetry*. His chapter on the poetry of the Pentateuch will disclose to us the secrets of his art. Independently of a few poetical fragments, (such as the words of Lamech, in Gen. iv. 23; the words of Balaam, in Num. xxiii. 7-10; and the longer poetic specimens in Jacob's farewell, Gen. xlix. 3-27; in the triumphal song of Moses, at the Red Sea, Ex. xv. 1-19; the prophetic admonitions of the same, in Deut. xxxii. 1-43; and in his blessing on the people, in

Deut. xxxiii. 2-29,) Mr. Gilfillan finds poetry in every important or interesting event or thing mentioned in the Pentateuch. The writer of this portion of the Scriptures, the great Jewish legislator, was prepared, he says, to be a poet, by his education among Egyptian temples and hieroglyphics. From these "he drank in the first draught of inspiration, to be renewed again and again, at holier fountains, till, sublimed by it, he dared to climb a quaking Sinai, and to front a fire-girt God." The style of Moses, being thus affected by hieroglyphical writing, "partakes here and there of certain of its qualities, its *intricate simplicity*." We have heard of a *simplex munditiis*; but a *simplicity of intricacies* has been heretofore beyond our circle of knowledge. And indeed, within a few lines of this, it is asserted that the style of Moses is "the least figurative of all the Scripture styles." The author declares, that the simplicity of Moses is "deeper than that of age's unmoved narratives, and is rather that of infancy." And all this, after characterizing the same style by asserting its "*intricate simplicity*!" But what less than such a palpable incongruity could we expect from a man who turns all the Bible into *poetry*; who says that a critique on this poetry must itself be *poetic*; and who, under the inspiration of the *furor poeticus*, presents himself, as he says the prophets did, "with the fury of God glaring in his eyes?"

As to those parts of the Pentateuch, (almost the whole of it,) which are usually deemed sober prose-history, the process of *poeticizing* them is very simple. The creation, Eden, the fall of man, the flood, the building of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the calling of Abraham, the story of Joseph, the cruelty of Pharaoh, the ten plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the legislation at Sinai, the destruction of Korah and his company, the erection and service of the tabernacle, and in a word, every notable event or notable deed recorded in the Pentateuch, are all poetry, because they have the *germ of poetry* in them. In other words, they are things or actions, about which poetry might be written. Such is the alchemy which converts every substance that it takes in hand into pure gold. With Mr. Gilfillan, nothing can be important, or worth our earnest attention, which has not in it the germ of poetry; and all that contains this is poetical.

We shall pass over his views of all the particular books of

the Old Testament, and come down to the Gospels, and inquire concerning the *poetry* which they exhibit. He makes an informal apology for the title to his 13th chapter, which is, POETRY OF THE GOSPEL. "Perhaps," says he, "we had better have designated this chapter, 'THE POETRY OF JESUS.'" But why? Because that, in the Gospels, nearly all the poetry "clusters in and around His face, form, bearing, and words." True enough, the central point of the Gospels is the person of Jesus, by which we mean both what he is, and what he says and does. Excepting the hymn of Mary, and the prophetic view of Zacharias, and the song of the angels, we were not before aware of any poetry in the Gospels, unless it be the quotations in them of poetic passages from the Old Testament. We know, indeed, that many parts of the sermon on the mount come near to the form of Hebrew poetry. But this results from the fact that the sermon contains many precepts which are thrown into a condensed and gnomic form, so as to give point to them, and make them easy to be remembered. They resemble, in form, the precepts of the book of Proverbs, or of Ecclesiastes. But the *form* is all that gives them a resemblance to poetry. There is evidently no design of a poetical nature in them.

How, then, do the Gospels become poetry, — the *poetry of Jesus*? Mr. Gilfillan assures us, that "the New Testament, as well as the Old, is a *poem*, — the Odyssey to that Iliad." This last comparison strikes us as quite a strange one. The *Odyssey*, forsooth! We had supposed that the Iliad was generally reckoned as the meridian sun, and the Odyssey as the *setting* sun of Homer. The New Testament, then, is only the *setting* sun of poetry; the Old Testament is its meridian sun. Yet Paul seems to have thought somewhat differently: — "For if the ministration of condemnation [the Old Testament dispensation] be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness *exceed* in glory. For even that which was made glorious, *had no glory* in this respect, by reason of the glory that *excelleth*." But we need not argue either to prove or to illustrate the position, that the New Testament is the consummation of all which is excellent in religion or sublime in moral sentiment.

But the *poetry* of this Odyssey; — that is our present object of attention. What is it? It consists, according to

Mr. Gilfillan, in the mysterious personage of Jesus Christ, in the constitution of his proper person, in his birth, his baptism, his miracles, his transfiguration, his discourses, his trials and sufferings, his condemnation and crucifixion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascent to heaven. His demeanor, however, is the thing principally dwelt on. His mildness, his gentleness, his lowliness, his compassion, his benevolence, his faithfulness in rebuking, his kindness in consoling, his weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice, his deep devotion, his awful reverence for God, — these and the like, as exhibited in the Gospels, make up its *poetry*; and these, one would naturally suppose, would constitute something more than an Odyssey.

Milton has written a poem called *Paradise Regained*, — one, after all, which is not unworthy of his name. Klopstock, too, has written a *Messiah*, which has given him immortality. These are (as they were designed to be) real and true *poetry*. But we never read them, and never can read them, with much pleasure. Our reason is, not that the poems are particularly faulty, but because they fall so far short of what the simple prose of the Gospels develops. The special ideas which the latter have given us of the person and the work of Christ have prepared us to place him on a height to which the Muses never climb. We turn away from the *poems* named above, with our minds dissatisfied and all but displeased, for a reason like to that which makes us turn away from all the attempted portraits of the Saviour, which the pencil of even a Michael Angelo or a Raphael has drawn. How can painters copy the face of him, from which beamed an intelligence, a kindness, a dignity, an energy, and a glory which no mortal man ever did or could possess? Our *ideal* so far exceeds the efforts or darings of the pencil, that we feel it to be a kind of detraction from the appearance and person of the SON OF GOD, when his portrait is even proposed. And so it is with all *poetic Evangelists*. We say, No! No! to them all. And why? Because none of them ever can reach the simple grandeur, the perfect verity, and the unadorned and childlike simplicity of the Evangelists. Not one word in all of them in the way of laudation or eulogy. Not one qualifying adjective or participle is anywhere applied to the great and glorious personage whose life and actions are

described. This is not the usual manner of men. Greek, Roman, English, French, German, and all other biographers praise, and labor to make their readers praise, the hero of their story, or of their imagination. Epithets are accumulated for this purpose, and urged upon us. But not a word of all this in the Evangelists. They never call Christ *wise*, or *holy*, or *just*, or *good*, or *kind*, or *compassionate*. They tell us, in the simplest possible manner, how he spake, by repeating his words. They show us, by narrating what he did and said, his supreme love and reverence for God. They say of him, when bending over the grave of Lazarus, "*Jesus wept.*" They exhibit him going from place to place to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cast out demons, to make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. But they simply state these and the like facts, in the plainest language which prose can furnish, and add not a word of eulogy ; yea, not even one which expresses their own opinion of all these things, except in the way of implication. There is not, there never was, on earth, nor do we believe there ever will be, such a biography as that of Jesus in the Gospels.

And all this,—what is it? *Poetry*? If so, then what is *prose*? Above all we can truly say, that it is not *Gilfillan poetry*. The two ends of heaven are not further asunder from each other than the extravagant, inflated, bombastic style of Mr. Gilfillan, and the crystal purity and simplicity of the Gospel narratives. Were it not for his piety, (and this we would not call in question,) it would be impossible for him, or for any man who loves such a gorgeous and hyperbolical style, and such tawdry and tinselled ornaments, to have any considerable sympathy with the meek, and unassuming, and childlike plainness and simplicity of the Gospel narrations.

Mr. Gilfillan begins his *poetification* of Paul, by the very appropriate question, — "Is Paul also among the *poets*?" "Wonderful as this is," he goes on to say, "it is no less certain." And what is the sum of the reasons why Paul should be thus classified? Simply this, that Paul possessed feeling, imagination, eloquence, and energy enough to make him a poet. To be a poet *de facto*, then, is not a matter of necessity, in order to entitle a man to a place on the "Aonian

mount." A poet *de jure*, or a poet *de possibili*, is enough to secure the Parnassian degree. Since his faculties might have produced poems, the corollary is, that Paul was a poet. His logic, we are told, "was only a buckler on his arm, behind which the poet concealed himself." We have, then, a long chapter on the words and deeds and sufferings of Paul; and all this to show that he was a *poet possible*. Therefore, Paul's epistles are *poetical*.

We cannot follow our author, in his process of converting Peter and James into poets. In respect to John, he has somewhat more foothold. The Apocalypse is virtually, although not formally, a poem,—one altogether of the Hebrew cast. Here, then, we might expect our author to revel. He begins with drawing an image of the Apocalypse:—"It is a hubbub of magnificence melting into beauty, and of beauty soaring into sublimity." Again, "Mystery, like the hair of women, floats around it, and hardens into a breastplate of iron over its breast." We can see how beauty can soar into sublimity; but how a *hubbub* melts into beauty, is somewhat in advance of our humble prosaic capacity of comprehension. Perhaps Mr. Gilfillan can explain how mystery becomes like *women's hair*; and how what was one minute lightly floating, in the next hardens into an iron breastplate.

But we must check ourselves in mid-way. We feel that we have as yet scarcely begun the examination of Mr. Gilfillan's book; so replete is it, in all parts, with that "fury which glares in the eyes of all true poets." But we have looked at the glare so often and so much that our eyes begin to complain, and to call on us to turn them to another quarter. This we shall do, so soon as we have presented a few more select specimens of the blazing meteors, which this wondrous comet has thrown off, in its rapid passage over the *terra sancta* of the Bible.

On page 8, he speaks of the Bible as being "the only one, of all poems, which has uttered in broken fulness, in finished fragments, the shape of universal truth." If a *broken fulness* belongs to the Bible, we stand ready to concede, that it is unique, and to be found only there. And as to *finished fragments*, it may have two meanings; either that each fragment is completely a fragment, or else, that a fragment completely exhibits all that the entire thing could exhibit. He is at

liberty, without any remonstrance on our part, to choose which horn of the dilemma he likes best.

On page 9, he speaks of *inspiration* as an "abysmal word." We can only say, that this is a new adjective in its application to the word *inspiration*. The *thing* may be deep and unsearchable, in some respects; but the word itself is hardly an abyss.

On the same page, he speaks of a narrative of the life of Jesus, and says, that "this life is at once ideally perfect, and trembling all over with humanity." It is, then, the *life* of Jesus, which *trembles all over with humanity*. Here seems, to us at least, to be something "*abysmal*." Life and humanity appear to be something quite discrepant. We may speak of *human life*, and mean by it the life of a human being. But how life can *tremble with humanity* is what we cannot understand.

Again, he says that "the moral and didactic poem [the Gospels] is a repertory of divine instincts." This is another of the *purpurei panni*. We leave it to the reader to decipher its meaning. On the same page, he speaks of the Bible as "an artless, loosely-piled, little book." A *piled book* rather disconcerts us; we can easily conceive of several books as being piled; but the *loose piling* of a *single* little book distances our prosaic imagination.

On page 12, he tells us that the Bible "makes what otherwise appear trifles, great as trappings of the Godhead." We have heard of the *trappings* of horses; and sometimes have seen the word, in a contemptuous way, applied to glaring embellishments. But to deck out the Godhead with *trappings* made of *trifles*, is to us a new, and we must confess, a most revolting idea. Or is this a part of the *poetry* of the critique?

Again, on page 14, in speaking of the Bible, he says that "this, and this alone, conducts up the awful abyss that leads to heaven." In all good truth, we think that this is *abysmal par excellence*. We have heard and read of the *abyss*, that is, the bottomless pit. It has generally been placed, we believe, in the *nether* world, and not in the upper one. And how the Bible can conduct *up* the abyss, and how this abyss can be *the way to heaven*, needs both Gilfillan inspiration and canny second-sight to discern. The natural man, we trow, is hardly competent to discern the things of such a spirit.

In speaking of the flood (p. 19), he seems to administer a gentle critical rebuke to Moses. This terrific and awful catastrophe, he says, "is described by Moses with even more than his usual bareness, and almost sterile simplicity." But not so does Mr. Gilfillan describe. He makes the *poetry* as tumultuous as the diluvian waves. Here is one touch of his red right hand; "The flood put a circle of lurid glory round the head of their [the Jews'] God." It is of no use to ask questions, in such a case. Poetry is not to be scanned by mere creeping prose. A little farther on, he speaks of "the feet of Jehovah being *feathered* with lightnings." But how can feathers and lightning keep company? We should expect *feathers* to be scorched, in any case of junction; but poetry is at liberty, perhaps, to fabricate such feathers as the lightning will not consume.

The phenomena at Sinai, he says, "created of themselves a volcanic stream of national imagination." Burning lava, then, ran through the interior of the Hebrew people. Some sprinklings of it, it would seem, have found their way to other minds than those of the Hebrews.

It may be well to see how a man, who has some of the glow of this lava within him, can appreciate others of a more simple taste. On page 28, he speaks of Whitefield's "coarse current of thought and diction," as being slightly and occasionally "tinged with a gleam of poetry;" and yet this same Whitefield, according to his judgment, was a man "of a more literal soul."

We can no longer stop to comment, except by mere hints. We lay before the reader a few more of the choice gems that adorn the volume, and leave him to supply the commentary at large upon them.

On page 30, he speaks of the Hebrew tongue as being, beyond all doubt, the tongue of Adam. This shows how deeply he is read in the history of languages. The Hebrews, he says, by using the present tense in their language, "have made their words to *stand on end*." p. 30. On the same page, speaking of musical sounds, he ascribes to the wind "a harmony, as it bows the woods, or howls over the mansions of the dead." The *harmony* of *howling* is rather strange music. Of Hebrew poetry, he says, that "it has no regular rhythm, except a rude parallelism;" that is, in fair English,

a rude parallelism is a regular rhythm. Yet, he says, in the sequel, that "to call this rude parallelism coarse or uncouth rhythm, betrays ignorance." How much interval is there between *rude* and *coarse*? He also says that parallelism is a "mighty prophetic dance between earth and heaven." *Dancing* is well known on earth, and *singing* in heaven; but a dance in the region between would be worth seeing.

On page 40, he compares the prophets of ancient times with those now in the church. Of the latter he says: "For the most part, they are an assortment of all varieties of scribbling, scheming, speculating, and preaching machines." What will his brother ministers say to this? Of prophetic language, he says that "it is fierce, insulated, and has ragged exclamations." When he says, that "a mule would be awe-struck in the gorge of Glencoe, but a mule is only a relation to Michaelis;" we, not knowing what breed of mules they have in Scotland, are hardly entitled to deny that some of them may be endowed with a sense of the sublime. But if so, how are they a *relation* to J. D. Michaelis, whom the author accuses of being unable to appreciate sublimity? On page 49, he says that Moses has given "the *hieroglyphics* of man's fall," and that "he runs rapidly *across* the antediluvian patriarchs." (We hope he stepped softly on them.) On page 59, he denies that Moses was "a mere stony legislator, fitly typified by the cold tables, which received and *cooled* the red dropping syllables of the fiery Law." We must suppose then that the words of the law, being red hot, burned themselves into the stones, which finally cooled them. Of Job he speaks throughout, as if the remote antiquity of the book had never been called in question. Few critics, we think, who understand such matters, would accord with this opinion, at the present time. Had the book been as old as the time of Moses, how is it possible to suppose, that not one of all the early sacred writers should advert to it, or quote from it? Besides, the dialect of the book puts it almost beyond a doubt, that it belongs to the *later* Hebrew. Of this book he says, that it contains "the outline of our reconciliation." But as this is only an outline, he proposes, in due time, "to develop his own further views of the reconciliation of man, in another, and probably fictitious volume." We hope not; we have enough of the *fictitious* in the present volume, to serve for the present generation.

On page 96, Mr. Gilfillan blames those who have invested David "with almost divine immunities, as if we had no more right to *ask at him*, than *at God*." And so on page 136, again. What is *asking at*, in the Queen's English? On page 99, we find the disclosure, that David, when flying from Saul, "strips off a song . . . to expedite his flight." What sort of an encumbering garment, then, was the song, and how much more light and agile does David become by *stripping it off*? It is David, he says, who "firmly, with his blood-red hand, grasps the Book of the Law of God." David ought, at least, to have washed it first. That same hand, too, has other offices to perform. "When David's blood is up, you see his hand *pawing*, like Job's war-horse, for the pen of the lightning." We did not know before that war-horses pawed for lightning-pens; nor were we aware that David's method of obtaining such a pen was to *paw* for it with his hands.

On page 116, is found a sentence that may well cause a shudder. "What if the last 'Depart ye cursed!' were to be accompanied by celestial laughter, reverberated from the hoarse caverns of hell?" In its connection, this is as much as to say, such will be the case, and it is a shocking thought. He takes Solomon to be, without any doubt, the author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles; and seems to have no cognition of the present attitude of sacred criticism in regard to the two latter books. Solomon's Song, he says, is "a rich slumbrous light, like that of a July afternoon, trembling amidst beds of roses;" and then, moreover, "Its figures of speech are love-sick." Light *trembling* amidst rose-beds, and figures *love-sick*! On page 124, he tells us, that "the power of prophecy was fitful. . . . It came on the prophet's head and stirred his hair. . . . It was a nobler demoniac possession. . . . The prophets were full of the fury of the Lord." This *stirring of the hair*, and *nobler demoniac possession*, and *divine fury*, are, we must confess, somewhat appalling. It is not badly said of Isaiah, that what ancient tradition relates of his being sawn asunder has been verified and repeated by the Germans, in their process of making out a *Pseudo-Isaiah*. Of Ezekiel and his first vision, it is said, "Who but one, whose brow had been made of adamant, and whose eye had been cleansed with lightning, could have faced

it as it passed?" We have heard of eyes put out by lightning, but were not before aware of its being a *cleansing* material. Of this prophet, too, our author says, that "after opening wide the mouth of Hades, and throwing in all Israel's enemies, — Pharaoh, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, and the Zidonians, — with a shout of laughter he leaves them massed together in one midnight of common destruction." Holy prophet of God! didst thou ever feel a joy so devilish as this? The major prophets he calls "giant angels;" the minor ones, "stripling cherubs."

Jonah's song of deliverance, "by an absurd mistake of transcribers," he says, "is made to issue from the whale's belly, instead of being sung on the shore, as every word imports." Amos, the prophet, is "a strong bull of Bashan, and he leaps in, two years before the earthquake, and bellows out, 'The Lord will roar,' etc."

Ohe! jam satis est. We cannot spare another inch for augmenting the list of wonderful things in Mr. Gilfillan's book. We have seen, perhaps, its like, but not its equal. Such a perpetual straining after the introduction of prettinesses and gorgeous imagery, and inflated metaphors, — such an inundation of rhapsodical phrases and transcendental fancies, it has never been our lot to meet before. We are not displeased to see a flower, now and then, in the way of decoration and ornament. But we wish to see delicate and fragrant ones, and these sparingly used. We wish them rather of native than of hot-bed growth. What a desperate passion for them one must have, who will not only cull roses, and pinks, and other like blossoms, but will put into the same bouquet the dandelion, the flaunting poppy, and even the nightshade and stramony. We like honey, but are rather afraid of eating very much at a time, or of eating it too often; for the sweet thus used becomes very bitter. To eat a plate full of *bons-bons*, at a sitting, and these of the lowest quality, is a thing that we must beg to decline.

But we have some graver things to say about the tenor and tendency of such writings as the *Bards of the Bible*. They captivate the young and unwary; and in this way they corrupt and destroy all simplicity of taste and of feeling. The perpetual effort to cull pretty flowers, and attach them to every part of one's dress, from head to foot, is a violation of

all simple and correct taste. It never can arise from any other motive than an ambition to be *pretty*, or to be what is called a *fine* writer, a *beautiful* writer, and the like. The sober and chaste matron does not paint her face, nor put stibium on her eyebrows, nor don scarlet and blue and yellow silks and ribbons. It is another class of females who do all this.

No sober man can feel that the religious element within him is moved or augmented by such reading as this book proffers. We turn instinctively away from it, as unnatural, assumed, factitious, transcendental. Heaven is not more discrepant from earth, than such a style as that of our author is from that of the *sacred bards*, whom he undertakes to describe.

Of Mr. Gilfillan's *qualifications* to write on Hebrew poetry, we know little or nothing, except what his book develops. He tells us, indeed, of his sublime raptures when he first read the commencing verse of the *original* Hebrew in Genesis. We must give him credit, then, for so much, and so far as we can discern from his work, for very little more of this kind. Perhaps he may have read some German critics, on the subject of Hebrew poetry. What he says seems to imply this; for all the writers whom he criticizes have not been translated into English. Still, reading German criticism is not reading Hebrew. It may be, that he has gone over some chapters in the *profound* way of using Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon and Grammar, both without vowel points. But no internal evidence of any *critical* knowledge of the Hebrew comes anywhere to our view. Indeed, with such a knowledge it would have been impossible for him to write as he has done.

We can conscientiously say, that we have not said a word in anger, nor set down aught in malice. If Mr. Gilfillan or any of his admirers should think that we set lightly by the Bible, or by the poetry which is in it, because we have spoken, with disapprobation of some things which he has said about it, they will greatly mistake our feelings and our design. The object which he had in view, so far as it consists in an intention to magnify and commend the Sacred Writings, we most heartily approve. And not only so, but we could easily produce a goodly number of passages from his book, which,

with now and then an unsightly excrescence, have given views not destitute of vigor, and certainly replete with point and vivacity. For the moment, of some happy paragraph, we could almost say, *Ubi bene, nemo melius*. Unfortunately, however, such passages are not very frequent. But this does not prevent us from commending the author's design, and paying him our tribute of respect for his motives, and the constancy with which he acknowledges and defends the Bible. Still, we cannot resist the belief almost everywhere evoked by the perusal of his volume, that he was far enough from that *unconsciousness* of *fine* writing, which he has so highly praised, and which, as he seems to assert, is essential to success. In chapter xviii. he has undertaken to give us a view of the influences which the Scriptures have exercised over the leading writers of modern times. We acknowledge, that some of the touches here given by his pencil are bold and skilful. He has said much, at times, within a short compass. But after all, though he may think it a wicked suggestion, we cannot help believing, that one of the leading objects in this chapter is, to show how extensively he has read the works of authors dead and living, especially the poets, and with what peculiar æsthetical powers he is endowed. He takes his seat, with the utmost confidence and self-complacency, on the tribunal of criticism, and authors of every rank and name are summoned before him without ceremony and receive an *impromptu* sentence. But the justice of the sentence we have not often found occasion to call in question. It is not wrong judgment, but it is the air of self-complacency and superiority with which the judgment is pronounced which disturbs our feelings.

We say in all simplicity and earnestness, that we are sorry so noble a theme and so good a design should be so painfully marred by glaring conceits and accumulated prettinesses. How do some of the most majestic passages of the Bible sink into insignificance under this treatment! Take the initial verses of John's Gospel, as a sample. Speaking of these, he says, that —

“ John leaps at once into the Empyrean, and walks with calm, majestic mastery beside its most awful gulphs. How abruptly he begins! *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* . . . Our minds are

carried back to the silent and primeval abyss. Over it there is heard suddenly a sound, which swells on and on, till to its tune that abyss conceives, labors, agonizes, and brings forth the universe, and the harmony dies away in the words, 'It is very good.' . . . To follow the Omnific Word — the Logos, and darling thought of Plato — till he traced him entering into a lowly stable in Bethlehem, and wedding a village virgin's Son, is John's difficult but divine task." p. 241.

To say nothing, now, of the "awful *gulphs* of the Emyrean, or of its conceiving, laboring, and bringing forth *to a tune*;" what, we ask, is the idea conveyed by the "Word *wedding* a village virgin's son?" How can we think well of a book, which is full, from beginning to end, of the like declamation? We speak an earnest sentiment, when we say, that such books, calculated from the nature of the subjects treated of to be popular, endanger the simplicity of young and inexperienced writers. We have little fear of injury to those who are well informed, and have the true principles of taste rooted and grounded in their minds and hearts. They will read, and turn away with displeasure, when the Sacred Muse is presented to them in the costume of Sappho, or in one which Aspasia might have put on. But young and untrained minds are apt to be caught with glaring splendor. Poetry is often best in their estimation when it is all blazoned with gaudy imagery, or filled with the most startling and paradoxical expressions. Let an imaginative young preacher steep himself a few hours in Mr. Gilfillan's rose-water bath, and he will be sure to fill his own sermons with flaunting and meretricious ornaments, that are alike offensive to purity of taste and soundness of doctrine.

There are grounds enough for lifting up the voice of remonstrance in these times against an affected and gaudy style. Simple writers, indeed, there are; but they are few, and, if one may judge by the tenor of most books published in England and America just now, such writers seem to be becoming fewer. It is deeply to be regretted. The usefulness of books, among the mass of men, is intimately connected with their simplicity. Above all, a pompous and gaudy style is exceedingly out of place when it appears in books that treat of sacred things. We feel that the subject is degraded. It is as if a painter were to attempt sketches of Isaiah, and Paul, and John, and

should put on them the costume of a Bond Street or Broadway exquisite. We enter a solemn protest against all such doings. God, Christ, eternity, heaven, hell, and man's immortal spirit and welfare are things beyond rhapsody. The inconceivable majesty of such subjects should awe the mind that contemplates them into the most grave, and sober, and humble attitude. To chase butterflies and cull flowers for nosegays is utterly incongruous with the proper duty of him who is discussing the subject of religion.

Having said so much which goes to show what Hebrew poetry *is not*, or rather, so much on the claro-obscure of Mr. Gilfillan's method of treating it, we should like to say something on the real nature and distinguishing characteristics of this poetry. But our allotted space is too small to do much to the purpose. We must content ourselves here with a few leading hints, — a mere skeleton outline.

That the Bible contains *poetry* needs not to be proved; no one denies it. But *how much*? And *what distinguishes it from prose*? These are questions not answered by Mr. Gilfillan in any definite and intelligible way.

It would be natural to resort to the Hebrews, in order to find what their judgment is on these questions. But we cannot do it to any good purpose. The oldest Jewish writer whom we can consult on this subject, is Josephus, (A. D. 75.) Philo of Alexandria also says something of it. From these writers, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome draw the conclusion that the song of Moses, in Deuteronomy, for example, is composed in hexameter and pentameter verses. To show how little even one who had read so much Hebrew as Jerome understood of the true nature of this subject, it is enough to mention, that in another place he affirms the very same poem is written in *Iambic tetrameters*. But there is later and better evidence, that the Jews had, at the time of Jerome, no correct and adequate views of the nature and extent of Hebrew poetry. This evidence is completely exhibited in the Hebrew accents appended to the text, which were designed to mark tone-syllables, to answer the purpose of our punctuation as to dividing clauses and sentences, and also to regulate the synagogue tones in cantilating the Scriptures. It must be remarked, that the accents of *prose* differ in some respects from those of *poetry*. Five out of the

thirty-one accents belong exclusively to the latter. In order to know, then, what the learned Masorites or Hebrew Scriptural critics deemed to be *poetical*, we can resort to those books which exhibit the peculiar poetic accent. Strange enough, only Job, the Psalms, and the Proverbs are so marked. All the other books, therefore, even the song of songs, the songs of Moses, and that of Deborah, and so Isaiah, and Lamentations, and all the prophets great and small, are mere *prose*, according to those world-renowned Rabbins. And so the Jews for the most part have judged, until quite recently. To go to such judges, in order to learn the nature and extent of Hebrew poetry, would be quite a bootless errand. No response worthy of regard can come from these oracular tripods.

In later times, strenuous efforts have been made, in many quarters, to find out the secret of Hebrew poetry. It has been summoned to the bar of the masters of metre and called on to respond to dactyls, and spondees, and iambics, to hexameter, and pentameter, and tetrameter. All in vain. It absolutely refuses to obey the summons; or it testifies directly in opposition to what it has been called to prove. This, at last, is generally given up; at least for the present. The great masters of metre, in Germany and England, have recently made what may be deemed an irrevocable judgment against the whole affair of *longs* and *shorts*, in relation to the poetry of the Hebrews.

Greek and Latin poetry, then, furnishes us with no criterion in the present case. *Scanning* verses, in the sense in which we apply these words to Homer and Virgil, is out of the question. And yet, without metre of some kind, there can be no poetry. But here is the difference between the metre of the Greeks and Latins and that of the Hebrews. The former was made by *longs* and *shorts* in words and syllables; the latter, by whole clauses. The former was made without reference to sense or sentiment; the latter had respect to the quantity of words as a general thing, but also much respect to a correspondence of sentiment.

The very name of Hebrew poetry, מְמוֹר, (*mis-môr*), signified *something dissected, divided, cut into portions*, or more literally, *clipped off*. Another name is שִׁיר (*shir*), *song*. Poetry, then, is something which is *measured by definite*

limits, and something *adapted to be sung*. The very idea of *singing* it (not cantilating) involved the idea of some kind of *metre*; for there must be limits where the tune ended, and again commenced by a repetition of the same. Hence, it is easy to see, how the great and fundamental law of all Hebrew poetry arose, namely, that of *parallelism*. By this is meant, a short clause or sentence, over against which, or by the side of which, is placed another like sentence or clause. The sentiment in the two clauses, (1) may be the same with very little variation of phraseology; or it may be nearly the same, with some considerable change of costume. This is called *synonymous parallelism*. Or (2), the second clause may be the *antithesis* of the first; when the parallelism is named *antithetic*. Or (3), the second clause may be a mere *continuance* of the thought begun, and be placed by the side of the first merely as a coördinate, or as a correspondent in respect to length or measure. With slight variations, in a few cases, from this order and metre, specimens of sacred poetry sometimes appear. But these exceptions are not worthy of a special notice in a mere general outline of the subject like the present. All we can do here is to give a few specimens of each kind that has been named; and of these merely enough to explain our meaning.

I. SYNONYMOUS.

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
The firmament showeth his handy-work.
Day unto day uttereth speech;
Night unto night showeth knowledge.” Ps. xix. 1.

Again: “When Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
Judah was his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.
The sea saw it and fled,
Jordan was driven back.” Ps. cxiv. 1 – 3.

II. ANTITHETIC.

“A wise son maketh a glad father;
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
The memory of the just is blessed,
But the name of the wicked shall rot.” Prov. x. 7.

III. SYNTHETIC.

"Praise the Lord from the earth,
 Ye dragons and all deeps ;
 Mountains and all hills,
 Fruitful trees and all cedars ;
 Beasts and all cattle,
 Creeping things and flying fowl ;
 Kings of the earth and all people,
 Princes and all the judges of the earth."

Ps. cxlviii. 7, 9 - 11.

The divisions in these cases are marked by appropriate Hebrew accents, which, on the whole, are surprisingly correct, considering the lack of knowledge among the later Jews in respect to this subject. We say *later*, because the Masorites must have done their work near to A. D. 609. But the parallelisms need no such marks, in the view of any intelligent reader. They speak for themselves ; and, even when translated into our language, they have a kind of rhythm which is pleasing and attractive.

Such is the *outward form* of Hebrew poetry in general ; yea, of all true Hebrew poetry. The number of words in each clause or *στίχος* varies with different themes and writers. In Proverbs x. - xxii. for example, most of the verses have seven words in the whole, that is, four in the first clause and three in the second. Sometimes eight words are comprised, and then the division may be five and three, or four and four. Now and then a verse of six words occurs, divided into three and three. In the prophets and in the Psalms we find many fuller verses ; yet they are arranged on a like principle.

It is, on the whole, a pity that our English Bibles were not all printed in such a way as to show at once what is poetry and what is prose, instead of melting all the Hebrew poesy down into one and the same English prose-crucible. More easily would the Bible have been understood by the common reader ; for he would soon learn how to make one parallelism explain its associate.

That such was the general law of Hebrew *metre*, (if we may so call it,) is clear from the Psalms and other poems composed *alphabetically*, somewhat in the manner of what we call *acrostics*. Such compositions are Psalms xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxix., cxlv., Proverbs xxxi. 10 - 31,

Lamentations i. – iv. The 119th Psalm is artistic beyond all the others, inasmuch as it comprises twenty-two divisions of eight verses each, and each line in these eight verses respectively begins with the same letter, and each division follows regularly the order of the alphabet. Here, then, we come to a very satisfactory criterion of the Hebrew metre or parallelism; for here we can know, with certainty, where each verse or clause begins and where it ends. But in these Psalms thus artistically composed, the same poetical phenomena present themselves which have been illustrated above.

Parallelism, then, is an essential constituent of Hebrew poetry. It may, indeed, be sometimes found in prose; but then it is accidental, and not designed. Scanned in this way, most of Hebrew prophecy comes before us as unquestionably belonging to the class of *poetic* compositions. In fact, nearly (if not quite) half the Hebrew Bible belongs to this order of writing. But not all the prophets are poets; Daniel and Malachi surely not. A large part of Jeremiah, and much in Ezekiel, is not poetry. So with a small portion of Isaiah, and of Job, and of some of the minor prophets. But the diagnostics of poetry are palpable anywhere, to the well skilled Hebrew reader; and they leave no doubt on his mind where he is to decide between poetry and prose.

So much for the *body* of poetry. We must add, however, to this, that poetry in Hebrew, scarcely less than in Greek, has a *diction peculiar* in several respects to itself. This is displayed, (1) *in the choice of words*; for example the prosaic *man, word, antiquity, water, come*, and many other words, often assume a different name or sound in poetry, when they are to be regarded as more rare, and more select than the usual words. Then, (2) *a different meaning of the same words*; which often happens in such books as Job, Isaiah, and others. (3) *The forms of a number of words are different*; and this, while the meaning remains the same as in prose. (4) *Many ends of words in poetry have peculiar forms and appendages*, designed, no doubt, to help out the metre. What Homer and others did by choosing from the Greek dialects, the Hebrews have accomplished in these various ways; and paragogies in Hebrew are not less frequent than in Greek.

We have now sketched the *body* or *externals* of Hebrew poetry. Only a few words as to the *soul*, and we have done.

The diction, then, in a rhetorical respect, is figurative, often highly so; it is, moreover, elevated, often remote from the vulgar one, abounding in comparisons, and animated with a fervor which never was or will be exceeded. To all artificial fire it is a stranger; and of gilding and varnishing it knows nothing. The writers do not wander abroad in search of ornament; for they rarely, if ever, employ it for the mere sake of display. Whatever comes into the composition, which has the character of the ornate, comes in spontaneously. Costume is for decorum's sake; and highly beautiful, also, it often is; but it is put on and worn unconsciously.

Lowth undoubtedly made a great mistake, when he labored to show that all the varieties and kinds of Greek and Latin poetry are to be found among the Hebrews; for all this is *body*, not *soul*. Hebrew poetry is instinct with soul. But the soul need not of necessity be encased in a Greek or Roman body. It has a body of its own, distinct, well marked, and easily discerned; indeed, so much so, that "he who runneth may read."

A meagre sketch we have made. But if these brief outlines were filled out in the detail, they would give us some tolerable notion of what belongs to Hebrew poetry. The jingle of rhyme it discards; that belongs to Arabic poetry, — even the Koran; and also to the modern Rabbinic productions named poetry. Our best poems in English, however, are without it.

We have only to add, that the *subjects* of Hebrew poetry, and the language of the Hebrews, furnish some of the noblest poetic elements that can be imagined. The subjects are all that is most sublime, awful, and beautiful in the universe. God, the eternal and holy One; heaven; hell; sin; redemption; a dying and risen Saviour, Lord of all; a sanctifying Spirit; death; the resurrection; judgment; eternal retribution; — these are the themes of the Bible, and themes before which all others sink into comparative insignificance. If the *religiosity* of the human soul formed and bodied forth the *Dii majores* and *minores* of Greek and Roman mythology, and awaked and attuned the spirit of lofty and beautiful

poetry, how can we suppose that the nation whose God was Jehovah would be wanting in the spirit of impassioned, sublime, and beautiful poetry? And there it is, in that blessed book — the Bible. In our best judgment, the Hebrew poets are as much superior to the Greek and Roman ones, as the themes, on which the Hebrews dwell, are elevated above those of Greek and Roman mythology.

The Hebrews, moreover, had ample stores, in the very texture of their language, laid up for poetry. What language on earth has such a living, animated power in its words? The *verbs*, the roots of all words, are instinct with life and with metaphor. Their formations and meaning show that the Hebrews were, of all men, among the most lively and animated observers of nature. The verbs imitate natural sounds of concord or discord; of weeping and of laughing; and so of other imitable things. Their wondrous flexion, through seven or more forms, is all expressive of gradations in action or passion, — of intense, of reflex, of mutual, and of feigned action. A Raphael, if he understood them, could not paint all their light and shade. One might almost say, they are *actors*, rather than symbols of action. Their *nouns* have often *intensive* forms; and when they have not, intensity may at any time be expressed simply by the forms of the plural. In this way, the controverted *Elohim* (plural of *El* or *Eloah*) may easily be solved. In the plural form, it means God in the highest and strongest sense. The adjectives, and participles, and even adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions, all partake of the traits of the leading words. What a glorious apparatus for the poet! The language will not suffer him to be dull, scarcely to be mediocre.

We have done, and yet have hardly begun. We can add only, that nothing can be more erroneous in taste or in fact, than to make all the Bible into poetry, as Mr. Gilfillan has done. Is he not aware, that *prose*, after all, has higher powers than poetry; that poetry is the offspring, for the most part, of a state of society not highly advanced in cultivation; in a word, of that state wherein men's feelings predominate over their intellect? A highly cultivated state of society usually withdraws somewhat from the cultivation of the poetic art. Such is the state of things at present. We have no more epics in these days; or if they are born, they are

consigned to an early grave. Discussion of every kind, history, eloquence, chooses prose. It is impossible that poetry, constricted as it is by metre, should give us the completeness of a prose picture. Macaulay understands this; Prescott and Irving know this; and we may, without much exposure to error, venture to predict, that poetry has seen its best days, and must be content henceforth to retreat behind sober, simple, manly, and energetic prose.

If there is any foundation in these remarks, then does it follow, that the efforts of Mr. Gilfillan to turn all the Bible into poetry are as useless as they are destitute of taste and of truth. If any thinking man wishes to put to the test the allegations that we have just made in respect to poetry, he can come at once to a just conclusion by asking the single question: What would the four Gospels be to the great world of men, if they were reduced to epic and heroic hexameters? The very thought is a degradation of them.

Mr. Gilfillan will doubtless set us down as æsthetical heretics, and regard us as destitute of taste. But we appeal from his decision to that tribunal of common sense and simple taste which is occupied by all sober and enlightened men. And if such an appeal be allowed, we have nothing to fear as to the issue of the cause which we have espoused.

ART. XII. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *Lectures on the History of Rome, from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Roman Empire.* By B. G. NIEBUHR. Edited by DR. LEONHARD SCHMITZ, F. R. S. E., Rector of the High School of Edinburgh. Second Edition, with every Addition derivable from Dr. Isler's German Edition. London: Taylor, Walton, & Maberley. 1849. 3 vols. 8vo.

NIEBUHR lectured on Roman history in the University of Bonn for three years, ending in the summer of 1829. The latest edition of his published History, which had the benefit of revision by himself, appeared in 1827. As his mind was ever active, and he was constantly engaged in collecting new materials to illustrate